TOWN & COUNTRY CHURCH

Our Plans

Interdenominational Periodical for 25 Religious Bodies

A new journal that will specialize on resources, methods and tools for ministers in town and country churches has been authorized by the Committee on Town and Country of the Home Missions Council of North America and the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America.

Brief stories of what people are doing in local congregations and communities will be the chief features. The aim is to help put the worker in the small community into touch with numerous activities and programs being carried on by churches in all parts of the country.

Part of Larger Program

The new journal will be an important part of an enlarged "cooperative rural church program," that will encourage a national "rural church movement." The paper will be closely linked with a regularly held National Convocation on the Church in Town and Country.

Responding to Requests

Members of the Committee on Town and Country have made this venture, in response to many requests, and in the expectation that at least 2,500 ministers in town and country churches will subscribe.

What Should The Church in Town and Country be Emphasizing?

Excerpts from the Discussions and Recommendations of the Commissions of the National Convocation on the Church in Town and Country, Columbus, Ohio, September 6-8, 1943

¶ *The following items have been selected to present the main "grist" from the Commissions. The Convocation voted to receive these, to have them printed and disseminated, and to commend them for study by all interested. A booklet containing a report of the Convocation will be printed in November, 1943, and will be sent without charge to those who attended. Others may have it by sending 25 cents to the Committee on Town and Country, 297 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.*

RURAL RECONSTRUCTION

Thomas Alfred Tripp
Mark A. Dawber
Edwin C. Field
Edwin L. Becker

• In considering the place of the church in rural reconstruction, we should first recognize certain ills or maladjustments in rural community life:

1. Competing denominations with inadequate programs, unattractive buildings, underpaid and poorly trained leaders are the rule rather than the exception.

2. The farm situation is decidedly unfavorable:

   a. Trained farm boys and farm laborers have been drained away by industry and the armed forces, leaving the work to be done by older people, children, and imported laborers.

   b. While the war has temporarily improved the farmers' income, there remains the problem of an adequate income to permit the farmers to work reasonable hours and provide satisfactory living conditions for the family.

3. The rural community has not yet become a unit of rural life. It has little consciousness of its own existence, and farmers and village people lack a sense of responsibility to the rural community. This contributes to juvenile delinquency, inadequate schools, a poverty of recreational and activity programs for young people, and has made impossible a united community approach to the problems of rural life. This has tended to make rural America a victim of political, economic, and cultural centralization.

We believe that the family is the basic unit in a Christian culture, and that rural life must be so organized as to encourage a stable family with opportunities for abundant economic and social life.

Every family unit is a part of a community. The small community, which is the foundation of American life, must be kept spiritually, morally, and economically healthy, wholesome, and vigorous. In the interests of the vigor of American family life in town and country and for the achievement of Christian social ideals we present these lines of action:

1. The church must first set its own house in order, demonstrating to the community the type of cooperation it expects in the community. We call upon the denominations to promote cooperation among churches and eliminate competition.

2. The church must promote brotherly cooperation among other groups in the community.

3. The church must cooperate

with all existing agencies seeking to raise the total life of the community.

4. The church must promote the inclusion in community life of all groups and classes.

5. The church must help prepare rural people for life in other communities into which they may move.

6. We believe the small family farm is today threatened by prevailing social and economic life. The church must encourage its maintenance by modern mechanized and cooperative processes.

7. The church must realize the possibilities of investment of its funds in establishing youth on family size farms and in community enterprises.

8. The cultivation of the desire for and the practice of wholesome and useful living in American villages and countryside made possible for an increased rural population must be a goal for the Protestant church.

9. The church must promote the conservation of all rural resources: human and material.

10. The church must hold that not the production of goods alone but the production of Christian personality be the chief end of rural life. The ultimate measure of any family or community life is the quality of persons it produces.

LAND TENURE

M. R. Zigler
A. H. Rapking
Paul L. Vogt

• For the most part, people in the country churches take land for granted. They are interested in saving souls but are not aware that the soil should also be an object of their loving concern. But it is felt that there is now the beginning of an awakening on the part of country church people and officers of the churches. They are beginning to recognize the land as a foundation of man's material and spiritual well-being.

Many agencies for betterment are at work in most rural communities. The local churches should become familiar with the programs of these organizations and learn how to cooperate with them. These include schools, farm organizations, local governments and numerous state and federal governmental agencies.

The church may appropriately sponsor discussion and study group meetings attended by representatives of many agencies. The churches may help to select critical problems in land tenure and bring them before these agencies for consideration. Many rural ministers could undertake special leadership on farm tenure questions. They could make a special study of the matter. They could initiate projects within the church and the community. The church has a definite responsibility for influencing the attitudes of its members toward the land, agricultural policies and programs and agriculture as a vocation. The church is the place for developing an appreciation of the farm and its contributions. The educational institutions that train ministers have an obligation to offer more specific and thorough training so that clergymen can take more responsibility and leadership.

Because the rural church and the welfare of rural people are dependent upon the stability, security and prosperity in rural communities, it is the opinion of this Commission that Congress should be advised of the vital interest of the rural church people in the tenant-purchase, rehabilitation, health and cooperative activities of the Farm Security Administration; and that Congress should give serous consideration to the extension of these programs as rapidly as experience will permit.

Because the rural church and community can most readily and completely attain their desirable objectives if the land in the community is owned by those who operate it, it is the considered judgment of this Commission that the lending program of the Farm Credit Administration should be adjusted so as to favor owner-operation of family sized units and discourage absentee ownership and concentration of land in the hands of large owners; therefore F.C.A. should give special consideration to those in need of small loans.

Since the general welfare of urban centers is so closely related to that of rural people, and city investors own and control a substantial proportion of our agricultural lands, city churches should be encouraged to study the agricultural problem, particularly landlord-tenant relationships, and the problems involved in the migration of rural people to the city; especially should the city churches bring together leaders with technical information bearing upon the problems of the rural community.

In thinking about the church and land tenure, we need to consider all of rural life. Not only must the church be concerned with establishing farm families on the land and keeping farm families on the land, but also with the welfare of the families, the businesses and the interests in the villages and towns, so that there may be unity of town and country life. There is an opportunity for the church to take leadership in diversifying the economic resources of village communities so that a rich and satisfying social life may develop in our small communities.

Those responsible for investing the funds of church agencies should become aware of the needs of farm and village people and evidence an interest in town and country life. The investment lists of church agencies should manifest as much faith in forwarding a rural family business or a cooperative business as they now show in urban investment opportunities.

Recent studies show that there have been sharp increases in the values of farm land. We are all aware that deflation of land values, following a sharp increase in values, results in foreclosures and losses of farms. We are interested in the wide distribution of the land in the hands of owner operators, and this can be accomplished only through the maintenance of values in line with the long time productive capacity of the farms. Lately the purchase of land by persons who are not owner operators has been increasing. Therefore, this Commission favors immediate action by governmental agencies and all other credit institutions to develop programs for the control of land values, and for encouraging the transfer of land only to those who

ll operate it. Much could be ac-
mplished through education and
luntary action, but legislative
easures should be used when nec-
sary.

The Commission commended the
ork of the Land Tenure Committee
the Town and Country Committee
the Home Missions Council and
e Federal Council, and recorded its
preciation of the cooperation of
e Farm Foundation in the work
land tenure. The Commission
lieved that the boards of home
issions should now take a more ac-
ve interest in programs for im-
rovement of the land tenure situa-
on in the United States. It com-
ended special projects already be-
n by several boards and societies.
ikewise the state, district and re-
onal officials of the churches should
me together to consider this ques-
on.

At the county and community
vels things can actually be done
a challenging way. Use must be
ade of the various governmental
xperts at work. The local churches
ust convince people that land and
ome ownership can be financed.
he church may find itself in a posi-
on where it is necessary to make
oncrete provision for capital. This
ay mean the establishment of a
redit union or other agency. It may
ean the encouragement of coopera-
ves as one way of conserving the
apital necessary for a secure land
enure. The local church especially
ust remember that if a program is
eally desirable, a way can be found
carry it through.

ARM LABORERS
ND SHARECROPPERS

Edith E. Lowry
William Ritchie
Don F. Pielstick
Helen White

The roots of migrancy are to be
ound in the problems of the low
ncome farmers, the increasing trend
oward industrialized farming, man's
nadequate stewardship of natural
esources and a willingness of a few
o take advantage of the economically
lisinherited. Consequently the mi-
rant has become an acute problem
in the general agricultural set-up of
the nation.

Agricultural labor practices which
have been inaugurated to bring
about maximum food production for
the war effort have created new and
difficult problems for the migrant.
Most important of these are restrict-
ed movements of labor, shifting of
groups of migratory workers into new
areas, and the introduction of for-
eign workers and consequent mis-
understandings.

The postwar period will be a
critical period for migratory labor
brought about by decreased indus-
trial production and the increased
mechanization of agriculture.

To establish a stable society in the
postwar period it is essential for the
Church to encourage and support
government and private agencies in
action leading toward (a) farm own-
ership for the low income farm
families; (b) the publishing of fac-
tual information as to labor needs
each year in the different crop areas;
(c) the establishment of minimum
healthful standards of housing and
medical attention; (d) the regula-
tion of child labor and the protec-
tion of the rights of migrants to col-
lective bargaining. Such goals will
only be achieved upon the basis of
helping the migrant to make full
use of this own creative abilities.

The Christian Church should effec-
tively lend its support to practical,
economical efforts upon the part of
the government and private agen-
cies to meet the needs of migratory
peoples.

The Christian Church, as the
Church at large, and as a specific
local church, has a direct responsi-
bility for the migrant.

The immediate responsibility is a
program of Christian social service to
meet the physical, moral, social and
spiritual needs of the migrants. It
has a special responsibility to fur-
nish the spiritual motivation which
will assist the migrant in living life
day by day on worthwhile terms.

Such a program must be founded
upon the basis of helping the mi-
grant to help himself. It should de-
velop and make use of available
local resources supplementing them,
wherever necessary, with the person-
nel and resources of the Church at
large.

Some of the features of such a
program of Christian social service
should be:

1. A study of the specific problems
and needs of migrants in a given
area.

2. The establishment of personal
contacts between residents and mi-
grants through which favorable
community attitudes might be
created.

3. The creating of opportunities
for group fellowship between resi-
dents and migrants.

4. Assisting the migrant and his
employer to understand each others'
problems.

5. Acquainting key people in gov-
ernment and private agencies with
the needs of migrants and encourag-
ing them to make available their par-
ticular resources.

At the same time the Church has
a long range responsibility for pre-
venting migrancy and for helping
migrants to reestablish themselves
in a community. The following steps
should be taken toward the achieve-
ment of this end:

1. Helping potential migrants to
remain on the land and to own their
own farms.

2. Vocational training to assist mi-
grants in adding to their produc-
tive ability.

3. The resettlement of migrants on
subsistence acreages with opportu-
nities for seasonal agricultural em-
ployment.

4. The establishment of coopera-
tive farms in areas where industrial-
ized farming is an established prac-
tice, so that the farmer may have un-
der such conditions a stake in the
land.

5. The planning for a combina-
tion of opportunities for seasonal in-
dustrial and seasonal agricultural
employment.

Again the Church must provide
the educational program and the
Christian motivation if the potential
or actual migrant is to remain or be-
come a resident member of a com-
munity. It must take the lead in
assisting the resident community and
the migrant in building those friend-
ly relationships which will lead to

the assimilation of the migrant into the life of the community.

The Church will not be able to serve the migrant unless it keeps its constituency and the community informed of the changing picture of migratory labor and its needs. This can be accomplished only by making full use of opportunities offered through the pulpit, by missionary education materials, religious education materials for all age groups, denominational periodicals, conferences for ministers and laymen on community, statewide and nationwide levels and through the medium of the colleges and the seminaries. Full use of the press and other sources of secular publicity should also be used whenever possible.

The Church as the friend of migrants has the responsibility and opportunity for providing a working program which will prevent migrancy, which will serve the migrant as a migrant and which will assist him to establish himself as a Christian citizen of a community.

The Commission recommends that this report be placed in the hands of pastors and local leaders for study and action.

THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY AGENCIES

A. J. Walton
James W. Sells

• The Commission on the Church and Rural Community Agencies, having considered its particular responsibility, decided to limit its activity to a search for a basic philosophy of inter-organizational cooperation rather than to discuss specific methods, techniques and programs. This Commission desires that these studies shall be continued through the year, and that this brief report should be used as a suggested agenda for similar groups interested in exploring this field of activity.

Throughout the deliberations of the Commission certain general assumptions persisted. They are presented here in the belief that their acceptance by a nation-wide interdenominational Convocation may have some significance:

1. All Christians, regardless of denominational preference, can unite in working for a better world.
2. This is a fateful period in world history and our actions have magnified significance. The whole world is looking to the Church for vital Christian leadership. We cannot fail our new responsibilities.
3. In the sight of God, Churches have often erred, and secular agencies have discovered goodness and nurtured it. Therefore, as we consider relationships between Churches and other agencies in the community, it is appropriate to consider the Church as an agency in the community—to be judged by the same yardstick used for evaluating others.
4. Churches must take the initiative today in furthering community betterment through inter-agency collaboration.
5. The Church as an organization is a social agency and subject to the same laws of social evaluation as any other agency. As the Body of our Living Lord, as a vital spirit in the hearts of men, it is above social organizations.

Certain questions were asked by the Commission chairman as a guide to discussion procedure. The answers given represent the consensus of opinion among the Commission members. This report must be considered in this light, and is only one approach to this problem. (Only a portion of the report follows)

Question I. What are the simple basic goals toward which the individual or community ought to move?

A "yardstick" or evaluating device makes specific measurements in the light of particular goals. The goals implicit in the above list of criteria follows:

1. The aim of human life, individual or corporate, must be the development of the individual with all of the implications of the sacredness of personality and the possibility of the growth and development of personality.
2. Health—shelter, food, etc. essential to well being.
3. Transfer of the worthy heritage.
4. An opportunity for fellowship both human and divine.
5. A place of dignity in a worthy

Town & Country Church

SAMPLE ISSUE—OCTOBER, 1943

Published by the Committee on Town and Country, Home Missions Council of N. A., and the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America.

297 Fourth Avenue New York 10, N. Y.

15c a copy; nine copies, $1.00

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You Can Cooperate . . .

1. By subscribing promptly. See order blank on page 16.
2. By suggesting topics for articles.
3. By sending in items for publication.

creative society—work, self-expression, possibility of making contributions to society, ability to live on the plane of a growing Christian rather than a mere animal.

. Security of person and opportunity.

Question II. How can it be determined that a technique is sound and valid in getting men to these goals?

. A technique must be judged in terms of time and place.

. It must be worthy of the respect of those involved.

. It must help to reveal and meet felt needs.

. It must respect personality.

. It must be adapted and adjusted to the time and place.

. It must be educationally sound.

. It must be all inclusive of all the people involved.

. It must be in keeping with the goals.

Question III. What are the determining factors that make leadership worthy of cooperation?

. Primarily there must be sincerity and a willingness to cooperate, and a desire to be a learner.

. The leader must have the capacity to be a leader and must be personally equipped for cooperation.

. The leader must be community —not agency-minded.

. The leader must have a worthy respect for the goals of the church.

. The leader must have respect for persons; he must have zeal and possess initiative.

. The leader must be conscious of personal commitment to his task.

. The leader must possess humility of mind and soul.

. And this question must be asked: Can the leader get things done?

Question IV. How do we judge that the experience the agency produces is a worthy human experience, so that we may cooperate with it?

. It must meet basic human needs.

. It must help promote the goals of the church.

. It must be a satisfying experience in the sense that it helps move toward these goals; it should develop initiative and personality.

4. The Extension Service of the Ohio State University suggests these five areas of experience: God, Job, Family, Law, Fun. If experience meets a need in one of these five areas of life it is valid.

5. On the basis of common sense (relativism).

6. On the basis of helping develop skills and techniques so that those who have the experience may learn to help themselves.

Question V. How do we judge the sincerity of an agency in seeking adjustment in present experience essential to further progress?

1. Is the agency more concerned in developing and caring for persons than its own personal gain?

2. Does the agency seek to encourage and help the most needy of the community along the lines of its own peculiar task and contribution?

3. Are simple guidance and materials made available to workers and people so that individual responsibility may be stimulated and employed?

4. Are plans made to care for the persons involved when there is success, failure, or error?

COOPERATION AMONG CHURCHES

Mark Rich
Philip Pitcher
Warren P. Waldo
R. F. Richter

I. *The need for church cooperation in the rural community.*

1. The chief reason for cooperation among any churches is that competition is not according to the spirit and teaching of Christ.

2. Furthermore, in a competitive system there are lost the additional spiritual values to be found in working together, and the greater strength of a united appeal by the Christians of a community to those who do not follow the way of Christ.

3. A third reason for cooperation is to be found in the inefficiency of our present non-cooperative programs. This inefficiency is wasteful of spiritual as well as physical and mental energies and resources.

4. Finally, in a day in which social and economic changes are taking place rapidly, when many struggling weak churches are falling by the wayside, leaving vast numbers of people unchurched, we must move forward much more rapidly with our cooperative ventures, if we are to save America for Christ. (It may be of interest to add that the United States government is requesting that only interdenominational churches be established in government housing projects.)

II. *Ways of beginning.*

1. Difficulties. We believe that any attempt at genuine cooperation will run into difficulties. We do not wish to over-emphasize them, but to include them in the total picture. Some of these are:

a. the high turn-over of ministers, due to inadequate salaries, denominational practices, and the aim of most ministers toward the city;

b. loyalties to denominations and buildings as expressed in the thought, "This is my church (my minister)," as well as denominational patterns of thinking on the part of ministers and laymen.

c. theological differences;

d. desire, individual and collective, of both ministers and laymen, to maintain the prestige of their positions and relationships; and

e. jealousies.

2. First steps that may well be taken to get started in a cooperative venture are:

a. Find a job to do, then do it without dwelling on the obstacles to be overcome;

b. build a spirit of good will through the fellowship of prayer;

c. cultivate the laity until cooperation comes at their demand;

d. develop a philosophy of rural life that will make cooperation necessary.

3. Start with simple projects in which children, young people and/or women can work together. Use a project at first on which there is

common agreement; then develop as soon as possible a community council of churches. Let those who desire cooperation be especially humble if there are those who oppose it.

III. *Ways of cooperating.*

Since no attempt at definition was made by the commission, we simply mention the various forms of rural church cooperative activity which came before us; the larger parish, the federated church, the community church, the group ministry, the cooperative parish, the church council, and various informal methods. Herein should be noted the existence of the comity communities of the Home Missions Council of North America, and state councils of churches, with carefully worked out statements on the method of interdenominational cooperation.

IV. *Some weaknesses to be overcome and some forward steps to be taken.*

1. Weaknesses. It is our belief that, if rural church cooperation is to continue its growth, some of the weaknesses the movement has developed must be corrected. Among these are:

a. lack of supervision;

b. the idea that the *plan* of cooperation once set up automatically solves all the problems which make cooperation desirable, and which grow out of cooperative activity—the substitution of the scheme for the gospel;

c. lack of leadership with adequate training, natural ability, and consecration.

2. Forward steps. It is our general agreement that supervision of cooperative projects should be provided by the denominations involved to a far greater degree than is often the case; and that interdenominational guidance is also needed. Some of the commission believe that actual supervision of all cooperative projects (instead of simply the community church where this is to be expected) should be provided by the appropriate interdenominational agencies with power to act and a program of benevolence cultivation.

. . . .

The commission brings to the attention of the Committee on Town and Country the desirability of: (1) giving publicity to the principles and practice of church cooperation through the journal, *Town and Country Church;* (2) disseminating news about tested ventures in church cooperation through pamphlets and articles; (3) stimulating case studies of cooperative ventures; (4) exploring and producing carefully planned articles on the different aspects of the controversial points in inter-church cooperation; (5) making objective general surveys of various forms of church cooperation and bringing the findings to the attention of rural pastors and people; (6) the use by denominational leaders including national, state, and lesser areas, of interdenominational leaders in local churches to create a greater interest in, and desire for, church cooperation; (7) the desirability of developing a more representative board of editors for the Journal of Town and Country Church, including thereon women, farmers, and pastors.

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AND RURAL CHURCH

H. N. Morse

• It is recommended that:

1. The matter of maintenance for the rural ministry be studied with the view of providing better financial support in order to improve the quality and enlarge the scope of the rural ministry.

2. The theological seminaries be urged to recognize the basic importance of the place of the rural minister and the rural church; that it be recognized that training for the rural ministry requires a distinctive and different point of view from the traditionally accepted training.

3. The theological seminaries include in their curricula at least a *minimum* course for the training of rural ministers, which would include the following:

a. A basic course in Rural Community Organization and Leadership.

b. A basic course in Rural Sociology.

c. A basic course in Church Administration from the point of view of the Rural Church.

d. A course in Rural-Social Economics.

e. A carefully supervised course in Field Work, recognized for academic credit.

4. In all other courses of the seminary there should be definite adaptations to include the needs of the Rural Church.

5. The office of the Committee on Town and Country assume the initiative in assembling and compiling information for the use of graduate students as to the opportunities available in the Agricultural Colleges for further training recognized as basic in the preparation of the rural minister.

6. A policy of cooperation with the agricultural colleges be adopted, as stated in the report of the Commission on the Agricultural College and the Rural Church.

7. The editorial board of the proposed new Town and Country Journal consider the inclusion of a definite department and body of material for use by the students in the theological seminaries.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE AND RURAL CHURCH

William V. Dennis
Eugene Smathers
D. E. Lindstrom

• The Commission reviewed and appraised the present services of colleges of agriculture and suggested modifications and additions. The discussion was on the assumption that colleges of agriculture may properly make available their resources to rural church groups, their ministers and people, as to all other citizens.

The activities of the Conference on Cooperation between Theological Seminaries and Colleges of Agriculture were described. These include the working out of a pre-theological major in colleges of agriculture, encouragement of short courses, provision for graduate training, a study of financing the rural church, the exchange of professors of colleges of agriculture and theological seminaries for brief periods.

Recognition was made of the work of other agencies carrying on work for the rural church, related to that of the agricultural colleges. These

ncluded the Extension Service, farm rganizations and numerous federal gencies such as the Farm Security dministration, the Farm Credit dministration, the Soil Conservaon Service and the Agricultural djustment Administration.

The following recommendations vere made by the Commission:

To the Conference on Cooperaion Between Theological Seminaries nd Colleges of Agriculture: That egional committees similar in organzation and purposes to those for the Eastern, Mid-West, and Far West reas be set up for the Southern area nd for the Southwestern area by the Conference on Cooperation Between Theological Seminaries and Colleges of Agriculture.

To administrators of colleges of griculture: That means be provided y the Colleges of Agriculture for nforming rural pastors about programs of the Extension Service, and ther agricultural programs, for eeping them informed on current levelopments, and

That national and state agencies f the church join with national and tate agencies of the Extension Service in providing such service, hrough such means as:

a. Town and Country pastors' conferences.

b. State and regional conferences for rural pastors.

c. Where possible through the employment of a staff member of the Extension Service to advance this program in a State.

To the Committee on Town and Country: That the detailed report n the Dubuque Theological Semnary—Iowa State College joint exeriment for training rural pastors e made available very soon to all nterested persons; That the report n the experiment in such training onducted in 1943 at the University f Illinois also be made available; That the experiments referred to be xtended to provide opportunities or similar cooperation between thelogical seminaries and colleges of griculture in other states or regions.

To administrators of agricultural olleges: That, because of the imporance of human relations in all asects of rural life, and because of the growing significance of community, the colleges of agriculture should stress the necessity of including rural sociology and community organization in the training of professional workers in agriculture such as county agents, teachers of vocational agriculture, home demonstration workers and others, and that where possible these subjects be required in the curricula of students preparing for rural professional vocations.

To the Committee on Town and Country: That the Committee be commended for putting into operation a plan of interchange between professors in colleges of agriculture and theological seminaries and that such plans should be rapidly extended.

To the Committee on Town and Country: That the Committee provide a means for discovering what types of training for rural pastors are available in the several seminaries, and that detailed information resulting from this study be made available to all interested persons and agencies.

To the Committee on Town and Country: That theological seminaries be encouraged to develop rural departments which will enable students taking pre-theological majors in colleges of agriculture, and others interested, to proceed with training for the rural pastorate; that the church agencies establish the rural church departments and the various denominational leaders regularly inform their pastors of the pre-theological majors made available in the cooperating colleges of agriculture.

For a period of more than thirty years colleges of agriculture in the several states have been offering a vital service to the rural church in their various short courses for rural pastors. Recently twenty-three colleges of agriculture have made available to undergraduates a pre-theological major the content of which was determined by the Conference on Cooperation Between Theological Seminaries and Colleges of Agriculture. Forty-six theological seminaries have promised full cooperation with the colleges of agriculture in accepting students prepared under this program.

Pioneer work in a further area of common service has been begun by the colleges of agriculture in Illinois and Iowa. They now offer special graduate work in residence on the college of agriculture campus for theological students in seminary courses. The work is given for credit which is acceptable to the theological seminary in which the student is a candidate for the B.D. degree.

Seminary students preparing for service in the rural church might well have such a period of training in a college of agriculture. In addition to courses such as agricultural economics, rural education, and rural sociology, opportunities should be given for first hand contact with the technical research being carried on at the Agricultural Experiment Station in order to provide an understanding of the economic and social problems facing farmers and of the resources available to them through the Station. Field trips to farms, rural communities, and institutions should be a part of the work.

The Commission therefore recommends that the Committee on Town and Country or the Convocation on Church in Town and Country, or both, urge theological seminaries to establish a policy whereby students preparing for rural pastorates be enabled and advised to take such courses; it further suggests that any college of agriculture interested in such collaboration consult the secretary of the Committee on Town and Country as to possible seminary cooperation.

To the Committee on Town and Country: That a careful study be made of the problems facing rural youth in this technological age, and a plan be made for the discussion of the problems by colleges of agriculture, church leaders and interested laymen.

That we affirm our awareness of the development of community in a technological age, and that we acknowledge that the church should accept its full share of responsibility in awakening and assisting the citizens of our communities to provide local opportunities in industry, business, and agriculture for those needing readjustment in the postwar period.

THE PASTOR'S FUNCTIONS

C. M. Serson
Alan Darling
E. Philip Vogel

• We approach our subject realizing the many difficulties of the rural ministry, some of which are:

1. The small turnover of the congregation, and the frequent turnover of the ministry, with attendant conditions of supply preachers, young and inexperienced men without supervision and help, and unresolved pastoral difficulties.

2. The extended geographical area of many parishes.

3. The lack of adequate financial support for the minister and his work.

In view of these problems, a general *recommendation* is that the Church at large move to establish settled rural pastorates, and settled and adequate financial support of the pastors. Such might well be planned on a denominational, district, or other group basis.

As to the rural pastor's *standard of living,* it was generally agreed that it should be at least equal to that of the average of his parish.

The transportation problem, being considered one of the greatest difficulties and of first importance, it is recommended that transportation be furnished or subsidized by the Church, possibly the Church at large, in addition to the regular salary. (It is noted that many business concerns so provide a mileage allowance for automobile transportation and replacement.)

The pastoral call is defined as a visit to a family in one's consecrated capacity as a minister of God.

It is suggested that the minister with his wife make the first call upon every family in a new parish, and that thereafter the pastor usually call alone, except for occasions of social or special family events.

It is *recommended* that the Church denominations inform the Christians as to the spiritual services the pastor can offer. Some of the elements of a pastoral call are:

1. The spiritual preparation of the minister preceding the call.

2. A sympathetic ear.

3. The sharing of joys and sorrows.

4. Personal counselling and encouragement.

5. Instruction in the faith.

6. Picture cards for children; tracts for adults.

7. The reading of the Word, or reference to a hymn.

8. Brief discussion of church activity.

9. Prayer.

10. The Sacraments, when deemed advisable.

As to *social obligations,* it is not felt necessary that the pastor return all social and dinner engagements with his parishioners: they do not expect it.

It is felt that the pastor should often call upon his people when and where they are working. Ministerial ethics demand the careful respecting of all parishioners' confidences. Care must be taken not to reveal such confidences in records.

The parish membership should be *remembered in prayer* by the pastor in his private devotions.

The minister's almsgiving to the needy should be provided by a regular fund or stated friendship offering of the Church. People should not expect the pastor to provide *their* benevolences out of his own pocket.

It is important not to take too long: be professional. Be encouraging; sympathetic, but not sentimental.

Have prayer; (and lay hands on those who are sick, after the example of our Saviour, Mark 6:5 and elsewhere.)

Leave picture or helpful reading material. Quote some helpful scripture, hymn, or poem. Don't hesitate to talk of death and its problems, the forgiveness of sins, and the promises of faith. (Preach to the congregation on the subject of death and immortality.)

The pastor should know well local doctors and undertakers before the emergency.

Contact the family immediately on notification; call as soon as possible.

Give sympathy and comfort.

Counsel on funeral arrangements, ordinarily respecting family desires. (It is felt generally by the commission that a brief funeral sermon, usually with a message for the living, is of value to a rural parish.)

Instead of floral tokens of sympathy, general favor is expressed for a more enduring and substantial memorial, such as gifts to a memorial fund for the beautification of the Church or other Kingdom objective, to the glory of God and the help of humanity. (The pastor or the Church may have available printed memorial cards for the signatures of such expressions.)

Enlist services of others in helping and comforting.

Call on the bereaved sometime soon after the funeral.

In all his work the rural pastor should bear in mind that he is the mediating representative of Jesus Christ. Like the early disciples he is called to minister,

1. With Christ,

2. To heal and set free,

3. Possessed of the power of the Holy Spirit.

The functions of the pastor in the rural Church life are boundless for humanity and God, but your Commission trusts that its suggestions, limited as they must be, will stimulate town and country pastors to an increasingly vital, consecrated, efficient, and saving ministry for all the children of God, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

CHURCH EXTENSION

Henry S. Randolph

• Across the centuries the voice of Him who said "I am come that they might have life, and might have it more abundantly" and "Go ye into all the world" is still to be heard. The implications of these words in terms of present day problems in rural life are evident to your commission.

The problems relating to the rural church which give special concern are:

1. The ministry to distinct areas, such as,

a. Sparsely settled lands.

b. Diversified agricultural areas.

c. Industrial areas with a rural population.

2. The mobile populations, both

migrant and defense and war workers.

3. Economic and social barriers found prevailing against numerous rural inhabitants.

4. Racial and minority groups.

5. Vanishing homesteads.

6. The relationship between city, town, and open-country churches.

7. Urban groups—urban dwellers who have moved into rural areas, but maintain their urban pattern of living.

8. Rural industries such as fishing, mining, lumbering, etc.

Your commission stresses the need of developing a vision of progress and expansion in both urban and rural churches, plus a stimulating spirit to accomplish the plans of the vision. The foundation for successful rural expansion of the rural church is based upon two principles:

1. A great undefeatable spirit of advance among clergy and laity. Christianity will not grow, parishes will not expand if the parson and his people are content with meagre efforts. The clergyman must be filled with a Godly inspired power of enthusiasm, be filled with a true understanding of his mission, and be deadly in earnest about it. He must instill this spirit into his congregation, and with their help go out and expand the parish.

2. The use of constructive methods, well planned and executed in the extension program so that future years will not see the discouragement of failure or stagnation because of a poorly laid foundation. Church extension is a systematic business-like procedure and not a hap-hazard hoping for growth. The closing of missions because of improper support, lack of leaders and activities, or a declining interest defeats the stimulating spirit needed to expand Christ's Church.

The office of the rural minister should be exalted. The halo of romance that often surrounds the foreign missionary is rarely placed on the worker in the home field. Nobody assumes anything in his favor. Recognition is rare; he is the forgotten man of the ministry. The remedy needs to be threefold:

1. The church at large must be convinced of the importance of this office, its dignity, its exacting requirements, and its necessity. It should employ a system whereby achievement is recognized.

2. The community must be freed of the idea that the minister is the village mendicant, and to accept him as a leader among its builders.

3. The minister must hold a high conception of himself and his task. We need more and better books on the ministry. We need the example of more men who choose to serve in the country church, love it, and can write attractively about it. We need more efficient supervision to provide stimulus and practical help, so that this lonely man will never lose sight of the tremendous significance of his job, and will give his best to it.

Lay workers should be provided with training for leadership in worship, teaching, and administration that their services might be used as a supplement to the regular ministerial office in rural extension work.

Some techniques found valuable in extending the rural church are:

1. The Trailer Church, equipped with sound and visual aids, an interior chapel, free literature and devotional guides; also a less expensive adaptation of the chapel with portable equipment carried by car or station wagon. These traveling missions have proved their worth in trailer camps, congested defense areas, at beach and summer resorts, and in out-point isolated communities. A visual education program, utilized in as many cases as possible, showing stereopticon or film slides, silent and sound movies, pictures mounted upon an easel and changed while the speaker talks, has been found invaluable as an aid in trailer chapel work.

2. The Church by mail and radio, which reaches persons and areas outside the boundaries of the local church. This program is supplemented by occasional visitations, community activities, study programs, teaching of stewardships, and vacation Bible Schools.

3. The Larger Parish, either denominational or interdenominational, wherein a group of ministers plan a concerted program of evangelizing the entire area where they reside, pooling their resources, having closer cooperation in all activities, and with each minister complimenting the gifts and talents of his associates. Various modifications and adaptations to this have been made according to local situations.

4. The Leadership Sharing Plan, wherein the minister in the center of an area takes the responsibility for the small town and open country churches located adjacent to the central church. Lay leadership is trained to go out from the central headquarters and serve in these adjacent missions under the supervision of their pastor.

5. Publicity is a valuable aid. Newspaper stories with news interest, short sermons, photographs, parish news letters should all be used to make the activities of the church known to the community.

6. Evangelistic campaigns of preaching missions, personal visitations, and services rendered to the inmates of jails, orphanages, infirmaries, or other disadvantaged peoples.

7. The Vacation and Week Day Bible School as a means of introducing the church in outlying areas.

8. Forums, lectures, and dramas promoted by the church as a community service.

9. The maintenance of a cooperative relationship with other character building agencies in the community in such a way as to serve as a clearing house and integrating factor for all community services.

. . . .

Your Commission recommends a national movement to make all church buildings speak the praises of God through beauty in design and construction. A stimulating and beautiful building quickens the spirit of the worshipper into higher levels of contemplation and at the same time creates a feeling of pride and joy in the inspiring monument in which he is worshipping his Lord. We stress the importance of constructing an adequate parish house which harmonizes with the church building proper. We urge the construction of buildings upon more than ample grounds, so that the church can be surrounded with well-planned and cared for landscaping.

We recommend the employing of a specialized church architect, and a

professional landscaper. We recommend the work of the Interdenominational Bureau of Architecture (297 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.), whose services are available at very small cost to all churches, and who can furnish the names and addresses of all cooperating agencies.

Where cemeteries are connected with the church, proper care ought to be shown to make them both a place of beauty and a mark of respect for the dead.

The church equipment needs to be selected with care that the appearance and symbolism may be such as to express the purpose of the church.

MINORITY PEOPLES

Edgar A. Love
J. Oscar Lee

• Definition of the term *Minority:* A minority group is any group of people who by reason of race, color, religion, the lack of numbers, economic stability or social and political influence is a disadvantaged group.

Why We Have These Minority Groups

A. Racial Minorities

1. Negroes are a minority group by reason of race, color, numbers, previous condition of servitude and lack of opportunity to be integrated into industry, political democracy and the social culture.

2. Indians are a minority group by reason of isolation, segregation, and the paternalistic policy of State and Church.

3. Orientals form minority groups by reason of race, color, economic standards and cultural differences.

4. Latin Americans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans and Haitians are minority groups by reason of race, economic standards, language and often color.

5. West Indians are a minority group by reason of race, color, and cultural background.

B. Religious Minorities

1. Some religious bodies are minorities by reason of background and voluntary segregation.

2. Certain groups are the product of frustration and represent the escapist technique.

C. Economic Minorities

1. The economic minorities are caused by the inherent evils in our economic system. Prominent among these evils are the profit motive, exploitation and the unsolved problems of agricultural economics.

2. Others are disadvantaged because their wealth tends to separate them from the community.

Church Program (particularly, local and rural) To Meet the Problems of Minority Groups.

A. The Functions of The Church

1. To develop Christian convictions, attitudes and action. It is the conviction of this Commission that the relationship to God involves the right attitude and relation toward one's fellow-men, if the Kingdom of God is to become a reality on earth. The Church must reemphasize the essential oneness of the human race. The problem of Christian relationship between groups should be primarily a part of the program of every local church.

2. The rural church should carefully evaluate all the component elements of the community picture and build a program which will minister to its varied constituents.

3. The Church should encourage and further cooperatives and credit unions on a community basis as correctives of the selfish profit motive.

4. In cases of immigrants coming into a community, it should be the responsibility of the established Church to make the approach and administer to this group. Special services should be arranged for them. Opportunities for social contacts must be provided. The Church should not depend exclusively on National Boards for the total responsibility for these immigrants. The local church should be interested in seeing that these workers are properly housed and equitably compensated. The Church should sponsor First Aid Classes and studies in Personal Hygiene in order to more effectively minister to this group.

5. The Church should teach people not to condemn a minority group because of the actions of individuals in that group.

B. Education

1. The Church should lead persons and groups to a knowledge of the finer qualities of other groups and cultural contributions.

2. The Church should encourage the presentation of stories of the life of minority peoples, representing them as normal beings, through literature, movies, etc.

3. The Church should seek to investigate and expose rumors aimed at degrading or harming any racial group.

4. The Church should protest moving pictures, newspapers or magazine articles, radio broadcasts, etc., that aim at the degradation or ridiculing of any race or group.

5. The Church should be the first agency to abolish segregation. This applies first to institutions supported by the Church, such as hospitals, schools, homes, missions and the like, and the Church should seek to have other institutions endorse this policy.

6. The Churches should bring pressure to bear upon the legislatures to repeal laws that place disabilities upon racial groups.

C. Fellowship

1. The Church should encourage inter-group recreation as a means of creating better understanding and spirit between groups.

2. The Church should encourage groups to work together on projects of common interest.

3. There should be further development and a wider practice of pulpit exchanges and inter-group contacts on Race Relations Sunday.

4. All groups should be invited to participate in the World Day of Prayer.

5. All groups should be invited to attend community leadership training schools.

6. Rural churches should adopt the 4-H Club program, and should encourage racial group cooperation in the club programs.

D. Action

1. The Church should advocate and work for social, civic, economic, health and educational fairness and justice for all groups. To be more specific, it should promote equal opportunity in education, health, living conditions, and employment

—equal opportunity for equal ability, equal health facilities, to wit, in hospitals and public health services, equal provision for adequate and unsegregated housing facilities, equal wages for equal labor.

2. The Church should promote a local committee on racial and group cooperation in which all racial, religious and economic minorities can participate. This committee should prepare a summary of the facts on the local racial, religious, social, political and economic situation and appraise them.

3. The majority group should take the lead in the initiation of this program.

FINANCING THE TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH

Leroy P. Burney
Kenneth A. Roadarmel

• This Commission devoted special thought to the meaning of Christian stewardship, conditions affecting the financing of the country church and effective methods of Christian stewardship. The key to Christian church finance is a thoroughgoing practice of Christian stewardship, which proceeds from the recognition that all property and material goods are held in trust for God and that they are not to be used for selfish gain.

Church people are generally uninformed concerning their own church budget and the per capita cost of their church. In many churches only a small proportion of the members are giving. Many people "give as if they were tipping God." Furthermore, in many communities two or more churches seek to function where there are only people and money enough for one. In other places the areas have too few families to provide for a challenging Christian program. Thus the poor distribution of local churches greatly affects church finance.

The Commission proposed that in general a local church should serve at least 1,000 people, or 200 families. A redistribution of churches is a basic step, if we wish to expect adequate returns from the practice of principles of sound stewardship.

The Commission agreed unanimously that the most effective means of financing the country church is the use of the every member canvass and the envelope system, with the tithe recognized as a minimum standard of giving. This does not preclude the taking of offerings on special occasions. It is important that the canvass be thoroughly organized but it should be guarded from becoming a merely mechanical procedure.

As a supplementary method of stewardship and financing, the Lord's Acre Plan of enlisting all ages in carrying through dedicated farm products, to be sold for church purposes, is strongly recommended. This "Bible plan" of dedicating the first fruits of the land to the Lord is now thoroughly approved as to both its financial and spiritual values in present day church practice. An adaptation of the Lord's Acre Plan that has been found very successful in industrial communities is the dedication to the Lord of the wage for the first hour of work each week.

Other practices having special value are the youth budget plan, offerings on Rural Life Sunday and at Harvest Festivals, the pooling of the resources of several churches in natural areas for financing the common program in the area. Very recently some communities have agreed to having a United Church Canvass in the Fall or the Spring of the year, when all the churches will go to the constituency at the same time.

The lesson committees and editors of Sunday school lessons and young people's programs should devote one quarter's study in each cycle to scriptural methods of stewardship and finance.

Every effort should be made to enlist and train in Christian stewardship every member of the church who is benefited by the ministrations of the church.

Steps should be taken to establish a clearing house for all stewardship and financial publications of value in the town and country church; the same thing should be done for all publications of the town and country church.

All educational institutions preparing ministers and for other professional workers, should include in their curricula and semester courses at least five hours study on stewardship, finance and administration for the town and country church.

Constituent denominations should make surveys and studies of finance and other conditions in over-churched areas with a view to forming federated churches and larger parishes and encouraging interdenominational cooperation.

Every town and country church should plan now for the return of the men and women of our armed forces, so that they may be integrated into the permanent peacetime church and community life.

Every church should be very careful in the consideration of all money raising schemes so as not to cheapen the church; money should never be raised through gambling or related devices.

URBAN-RURAL RELATIONS

James Myers
Howard Fuller
B. F. Wentworth

• Since labor and farmers are natural partners in the common heritage of productive toil, although there is a gap between caused by location and program; and since there are reactionary and fascist forces abroad in our country which could exploit this weakness to the great detriment of democracy in America,

Therefore we call upon the leaders of the country and city churches to establish new communication between city and country, between farm and labor, in order that we may help realize that brotherhood which is the purpose of the church's program for human relations.

We therefore recommend the following procedures to help realize this purpose—

1. Promote informal conferences with representatives of the major economic and occupational groups including representatives of organizations of farmers and labor and representatives of industrial management, to establish an understanding between groups with inherent conflicts or differences of opinion.

2. Arrange conferences between the editors of farm and labor papers to realize their common goals.

3. Through the common ground

of consumer and producer cooperation, point the way of cooperation between rural and city peoples to attain the products of their toil at reasonable rates.

4. Through the fellowship of Farm-Home Week at the State College on Rural Church Day, promote understanding through a speaker on rural-urban relations.

5. Promote education about a cooperative economy as a basis for world peace.

6. Through the State Council of Churches establish a joint board of research between Farmers, Labor, Consumer and the Church employing a skilled person as secretary who could gather information and facts through conventions and other places of contact on matters common to all these interests.

7. In church summer conferences and other places bring to rural and urban youth and alert adults courses, that will challenge them to the possibilities of higher planes of social living, and especially develop trained leadership for both groups. We recommend to the pastors and other leaders the following literature as helps in carrying out the above suggestions.

a. Techniques for Churchmen in Social Education, a pamphlet by James Myers, Federal Council of Churches, 297 Fourth Ave., New York, 5 cents.

b. A Program of Community Goodwill Conferences held by the Michigan Council of Churches, 42 Michigan Arcade, Lansing, Mich.

AGRICULTURAL MISSIONS

John H. Reisner

• The rural church is related to agricultural missions, on the one hand, through the agricultural missions projects carried on by the Home and Foreign Mission Boards in their national and worldwide missionary programs and, on the other hand, to the local rural community through the ministry of the Church to Agriculture and Rural Life. In a very real sense both the rural minister and the Christian farmer are agricultural missionaries, and to this the Commission gave major consideration.

The rural minister serves the ministry of the church in Agriculture chiefly in three ways: first, by participation in the activities of farmers' organizations; secondly, by his interpretation of the religious and spiritual values which inhere in the processes of agriculture; and, thirdly, as he relates the experiences which farm men and women have in their daily lives on the farms and in the farm homes to the worship of God.

The Christian farmer is a Christian witness and by recognizing his vocation as a divine calling becomes in a very real sense an agricultural missionary as he accepts his Christian responsibility with reference to stewardship of the land and operating the farm business on the basis of Christian ethical and moral teaching in a system of agriculture which at many points is un-Christian.

His vocation as a Christian farmer demands full acceptance of his responsibility for neighborliness, cooperation, standards of honesty, participation in community activities and consciousness at all times of his active participation and collaboration with God in the natural processes on which agriculture depends. A Christian rural civilization demands a Christian agriculture and every Christian farmer and rural minister has a definite responsibility in making it so. They are therefore agricultural missionaries in the best sense of the term and become definitely related to the worldwide agricultural missions enterprise.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

John B. Ketcham

• If the function of the Church is to bring man into relationship with God and his neighbor, in the light of man's best conception of what this means, the Church must be the laboratory where boys and girls, young people and men and women can have the opportunity to experiment in creative Christian living. Religious education at its best is the Church, both rural and urban, providing the setting for this experiment. In the light of this the Commission on Religious Education faced the following problems, with some recommendations.

We appreciate the fact that the rural church school does have special problems concerning teaching materials definitely related to rural life. However, we recommend that the teaching materials already available be carefully weighed by a local committee and selection made according to local needs. We recognize that communities are different even as the people who make them. Therefore it is not conceivable that any one curriculum will fit the needs of all groups. We therefore recommend that a planning committee define the needs, select materials, and project an ongoing program of Christian education.

We further recognize that a primary problem is the enlisting and training of mature leadership, and that the responsibility for establishment of adequate curriculum and training of teachers falls on the minister whose responsibility it is to initiate continuous opportunities for leadership training. We are aware that the average minister is not always fitted for this task, and therefore recommend that seminaries place greater emphasis on the fundamental educational philosophy toward the total program of the Church. To committees planning institutes and conferences of every kind for ministerial training, we recommend the inclusion of courses which give this basic educational philosophy.

We urge that every opportunity be utilized as an opportunity in Christian education—the Sunday church school, the vacation church school, the weekday school, the camp, institutes and informal play groups, making use of the mail, such as the Mountain Mission by mail in New Hampshire,—in short, every experience is a teaching experience. "Go teach"!

The Convocation

• Almost 450 persons from forty-one states and Canada attended the Convocation on the Church in Town and Country, held September 6-8, at Columbus. Because of war-time travel conditions the session was called as an informal planning conference. The Convocation will be held regularly and the next session will probably be held in the Middle West in the Fall of 1944.

The Meaning of Christianity for Rural Life and of Rural Life for Christianity*

MARK A. DAWBER

Executive Secretary, Home Missions Council of North America

• The objective of this Convocation, as I understand it, is to give a new impetus to the rural church and to crystallize a movement looking toward an improved religious life in rural America. So far as I am able to judge, the basic concerns are the same as they have been for some years. The war situation has only intensified the issues and made even more imperative the appreciation of those values that some of us have been proclaiming through the years as the primary consideration not only for a strong, satisfying rural life, but for all of life. Dr. J. H. Kolb of the University of Wisconsin has stated these values as follows:

1. The primacy of the family;
2. Land—The earth as God's gift;
3. The importance of cooperative effort;
4. The spiritual quality of man.

To these I should like to add a fifth —the significance of the community. The immediate situation created by the war has, as usual, had the effect of setting aside some of these considerations, but as the war comes to an end and we face the aftermath, involving as it inevitably will a drastic readjustment of our industrial life, once again we will be face to face with the acute problems of unemployment, a back-to-the-land movement and the reconsideration of all those things that rural leaders have insisted are the foundation of any worthy civilization. Thus we do well *now* to call attention to these rural resources, that from every point of view are so essential to moral, social, and spiritual living.

A Gospel of Redemption

The meaning of Christianity for rural life is, in general, the same as for life everywhere: it is a gospel of redemption. Rural people as individuals need to be redeemed; rural society is also in need of redemption. If I were to set down in a single sentence what the meaning and purpose of Christianity is for rural life I would say—to hasten the coming of the Kingdom in rural America. There is a text for us to this end: "Repent, for the Kingdom is at hand." Its command to us is to go out to rural areas as elsewhere and preach a gospel of repentance. Change your mind for the Kingdom of God is at hand.

Rural people need this message in its modern as well as its historic meaning and implications just as much as the people of the cities. In its historic sense Christianity has come to our rural areas with a gospel of individual conversion. Most of us are familiar with the revival meetings that characterized the earlier days of the rural church and that still obtain in some of the more remote sections of the country, and we thank God for whatever good was derived from them and grant that there was much good, for the church as it now exists is, in the main, the product of such programs in individual conversion.

But most of the old revivalism has lost its meaning for rural life. Much of it was never what it was supposed to be and ultimately went to seed in fanatical emotionalism. The Christian religion must be given new meaning in terms of salvation for rural life. Rural people need salvation, but they need salvation in terms of a more constructive and wholesome Kingdom of God interpretation than prevailed in the past. Rural society needs salvation in terms of those values that we now see, in the clearer light of an intelligent understanding of the Gospel, have special significance for rural welfare and development.

To try to define the meaning of Christianity for rural life for this conference would seem a superfluous task. Christianity was born and raised, as it were, in a rural environment. The Bible is a rural book; it is the history of the experiences of rural people in their search for God and their struggle to achieve His will as they lived out their days in simple but rigorous rural conditions.

The coming of the Saviour is itself a fact of rural life that should be given greater recognition, the significance of which is growing with the passing of time.

Out of Nazareth

People are still asking, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" One can well imagine the conversation in Jerusalem when the announcement was made that the saviour of men would come out of the remote village of Nazareth. Jerusalem of course was the only place from which to expect such a leader. But the fact remains that from Nazareth the Messiah came, and it was Jerusalem which crucified him. The world has evidently changed very little in certain respects, particularly in this attitude of the superiority of the city to the country. To my mind this is one of the most devastating elements with which rural life has to contend. It has penetrated almost every realm. Farmers are now beginning to extricate themselves from it in the matter of their relative status in agriculture versus industry. We see this expressed in the varied ways in which farm leadership and organizations are asserting themselves in the total economic life and in national affairs, but the tragedy is that these same farmers accept with little protest this inferiority complex in matters of education and religion in their communities. The idea still prevails that there must be something wrong with a teacher or a preacher if he remains in the rural school or the rural church. So far as this problem characterizes the rural church our ecclesiastical leadership is also to blame. So long as the appointment or calling of a rural minister continues on the present basis there is little hope to change this inferiority complex. The rural ministers could themselves do much to change the present status, and we may hope that this conference will take a long step forward in that direction.

If there is any one meaning that Christianity has for rural life, it is this point. All life is sacred. People in rural areas have the same needs,

* Most of the opening address appears here.

the same hopes and aspirations as the people in the city, and Christianity comes as the answer. There is nothing inferior about rural life.

Reckoning with God

But Christianity has meaning for rural life in some very specific ways. By the very nature of rural life there is of necessity a desire for and response to religious things that only Christianity can satisfy. God has the farmer, we may say, in a vise—he has to reckon with God at every turn. And while life has become more complex even in rural areas, the basic needs arising out of rural living are the same. If anything, one might say they are more intensified by the increasing complexity. The seasons as they come and go, seedtime and harvest, life and death—these are the everlasting facts of life in rural areas that stand out in sharp relief in contrast to the city, and it is to these facts that Christianity comes with its gospel of reconciliation and its eternal answer. There is no other answer.

Attention will be called in this conference to the distinctive values in rural life that suggest the meaning of rural life for Christianity. Is it not possible that the specific meaning of Christianity for rural life is within these same values? At the risk of seeming repetitious, I am assuming that such is the case.

Christianity is concerned with people. Wherever the social trends are such that they produce the primary reproductive centers of human life, it must surely follow that in these situations Christianity has significant meaning. Our rural areas for the most part do constitute this reproductive basis, hence Christianity has a special signficance for rural people. In these rural areas where the largest proportion of children are born and where they will remain through the formative period of childhood and youth, here it would seem that Christianity has a special mission, and the church, both national and local, is remiss that does not seize the opportunity to make available and meaningful the Christian philosophy of life. If Christianity can be made really meaningful to this seedbed of our population, we should have little to fear as to what would happen elsewhere.

Home and Family

In the realm of the home and the family the same is equally true. If it is a fact, as we so claim, that we have the largest proportion to the population of large families in rural areas, then it follows that Christianity has a unique contribution to make to our rural family life. After all is said, the home and the family are more important than the church. The church should exist for the homes and families of the community, to make Christianity meaningful to these homes. This, to my way of thinking, is the most important service that the church could render. This calls for something beyond preaching, or the worship service or the church school, important as these are as agencies to enrich the home and family life. I am thinking of a service to be rendered to the home and the family as a unit in itself. Such a program, it seems to me, would help to make each home a sanctuary of God in which the vital things of the Christian life could be made paramount. Christianity should have this meaning for rural life.

In view of what is happening to the home just now as a result of war emergencies, I believe it is particularly important to conserve the home and family values wherever they remain in any degree less affected or almost undisturbed by the war. There is no place where the family has not been affected in some way, but our rural homes in all probability have been less disturbed so far as the family values are concerned. In all too many instances in our cities the homes just now are being used as a means to an end, and that end, of course—war. Millions of homes have lost their privacy, and the normal relations of parents to their children have been destroyed. The home is an end in itself, and, when that has gone, there is not much left upon which to build a Christian civilization.

Christianity comes in this moment of chaos and catastrophe and pleads with us to conserve and enrich these home and family values. This in a supreme sense is its message for rural life.

The Community

Next to the home in rural life comes the community in the realm of social and spiritual significance. The days that are now upon us are calling loudly for some rebirth of spiritual motivation in community life. Time was when the church did function in a very real sense as a community institution. The changing community and the various factors of change in the institutions of the community, such as the school, have all detracted from the spiritual entity of the community. The church has been sidetracked. For this the church itself ofttimes is responsible. Where there is overchurching and competition it is impossible for Christianity to have a meaning for the community. In many instances the church is the most divisive factor, destroying the community spirit and thus making impossible the contribution that Christianity has above everything else to make to the community basis of life. Churches in rural life should consider seriously this fact and should so reorganize in order that Christianity may make its genuine community contribution.

We need to remember also that this community basis of life is an essential factor in democracy. It was in the face-to-face experiences of the simpler rural community life that our democratic ideals and experiences found their rootage. Our cities are perilous places for democracy because there is no community basis of life.

Democracy is the political expression of Christianity, and it is to our rural communities that we continue to look for an opportunity to enrich the democratic process. Christianity gives meaning to rural life in terms of the democratic process. In these days in which we are concerned about the preservation of democracy in the world, we will do well to keep alive and fresh the well-springs of democracy in our rural communities through the ministry of the rural church.

The Land

This conference will lay much stress upon land and land tenure as vital factors in rural life. Land is a

primary factor and rural value in religion. J. H. Bradley in his *Autobiography of Earth* has stated the case in a brief paragraph.

> The forces that mold the good earth have likewise molded humanity. Physiographic variations of the land have everywhere varied the lives of the inhabitants. And man who must follow the earth wheresoever it may lead, must bend to the earth's limitations.

But the meaning of Christianity to rural life as related to land is not easily accepted. Nevertheless the fact remains that without a Christian conception of ownership and use, this basic foundation of life—the land—loses its value. The result is depletion, erosion, and all the other ills to which land has become prey in recent years. The following statement from Herbert Agar's book, *The Pursuit of Happiness,* is indicative of what we have in mind.

> 1. Within a few generations America has destroyed, beyond cure, about 100 million acres of once fertile land (100 million acres means an area the size of all the New England States plus Kentucky plus Indiana.)
> 2. Another hundred million acres of crop land will be gone for good within a generation or two, if our present habits of using them are not changed.
> 3. About 165 million acres of grasslands have been made worthless by cultivation and overgrazing, followed by fire, drought and dust. Most of this can be redeemed with long patient, expensive care.

Christianity surely has some meaning for this criminal waste and exploitation of the land. Stewardship is a Christian doctrine. If stewardship cannot be secured in the relation of farmers to the land, then stewardship as a Christian doctrine is impossible. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." There is desperate need of the message of Christianity in rural life with special significance for the land.

But when we have said everything that can be said about land and its spiritual significance, we are driven to the further conclusion that it is the man on the land that is our primary concern. Again I should like to refer to that important address made by Dr. J. H. Kolb on "Shifting Points of Emphasis in Rural Life and Agriculture," in which he lay particular stress upon this human emphasis. I thoroughly agree with him that the emerging emphasis is on the people. The differing capacities of people must be taken into account. At least it can be said that the consideration of the human capacities and values is equally important with land values and use. After all, the central meaning of Christianity for rural life or any other life is the sacredness of human personality, and it is important to consider all our rural resources and programs in order that rural people can be helped to the highest possible development and life be made abundant and satisfying.

Creative Work

Another value to which reference should be made is that of creative work. I fully appreciate the difficulty of preaching the virtue of work in a day when the whole current of thought and planning is in the opposite direction. But I will still insist that from the rural point of view we must come to grips with this aspect of rural life. As far as I can see, honest toil will continue to be a necessity in rural life. No one who knows rural life will go there expecting to have an easy time. Farmers of all people are fully conscious of work as a basic necessity. The recent depression years have sapped much of the value and joy of honest toil, with the result that there have been a loss of inner resources and the destruction of the morale of people. Some people are now realizing that they have been so absorbed in the pursuit of easy money without work that they have missed everything worth while in life. Work for them has been regarded not as a virtue but as a drudgery, as a curse. This attitude has left them with what the writer of the 106 Psalm called "leanness of soul."

Well, I am convinced that work needs to be given a new dignity, and this can be done in rural life better than anywhere else. If this is to be, however, the Christian sense of the religious value of work must be achieved. Drudgery we must get rid of, but creative work must more and more be given its place as a Christian virtue.

Urbanism

Another aspect of rural life that will need the inspiration and spiritual guidance of Christianity is the encroaching urbanism. This is the inevitable trend of our present economic system. The war emergency is indicative of what is likely to happen when the war is over. The technical industrial training and experience that millions of rural people are now receiving, both in the armed forces and in war industry, will create a new and more intensified urban psychology that will have a disrupting effect upon rural life. That more and more rural life will be involved in industry is an accepted fact. The decentralist movement should be encouraged, but with it there is need to keep vital the finer qualities that rural life is able to furnish.

It is interesting to note in this regard what some of the great leaders of other nations are saying. Winston Churchill in a recent speech said:

> "I look forward with great hope to the re-creation of the rural life of Great Britain as a result of the changes that the war is making."

The Archbishop of Canterbury is not quite so optimistic as to the possible effect of this industrial change, and in a recent article in the *Christian Century* had the following warning to offer. Pleading for a federal system of cooperative government in the world after the war he said:

> "But I do not believe that a federal system can of itself secure justice or even abolish war unless the economic life of men is ordered in principles more expressive of fellowship than at present. The trend toward war is inherent in the internal economy of the modern industrial nations. . . The profit motive has become the dominant motive. It is this which has led to the sacrilegious sacrifice of rural England to urban interests, and subjects it to policies framed for urban conditions. It has turned man into an economic animal."

Paganism

Those of you who know me would,

I am sure, be very much surprised if not disappointed if I failed to say something about the pagan economics that characterizes our society, and that has played havoc with rural life. I shall not disappoint you. I think that such a reference rightly belongs in this discussion. I am not arguing that our rural economics is not involved, but I will insist that it is the victim of our economic paganism that has its roots in our industrial society. As man has continued with his inventive process, in the development of machinery by which he has been able to increase the material goods of the world, he has concluded that man and not God is the owner of wealth. The gospel of stewardship is a difficult gospel to preach in an industrial age when man has concluded that he can lift himself up by his own material boot-straps. I confess that I do not see much hope of reforming the economic system in industrial society. Profit and ownership are so closely intertwined that I see little place for stewardship, which I contend is essentially Christian. But it need not be so in rural society. In spite of all the scientific and technical progress that has been made in agricultural production—and it has been tremendous—rural people know that in the final analysis they have to reckon with God. Man sows and plants and cultivates, but "God giveth the increase." Rural people should of all people know that in all these things they are not owners but stewards. Christianity comes to rural people with this gospel of stewardship. The parable of the rich fool is a searching story that needs to be told and retold. "My soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years . . . eat, drink and be merry. But God said, Thou fool, this night is thy soul required of thee; whose then shall these things be which thou hast provided?" When we come to consider our rural resources this gospel of stewardship has particular spiritual significance for rural life. If the rural life of tomorrow is to escape tragedy it will be necessary for the rural church to exert itself and make the message of Christianity more meaningful and dynamic in the economic realm of rural life.

Let Us Resolve

Now having said all this by way of the meaning of Christianity for rural life it seems to me that there is little left to be said on the other side of the question, that is, the meaning of rural life for Christianity. This has all been implied in what we have presented.

Perhaps we could state this in a brief summary as a concluding note. The meaning of rural life for Christianity, in a word, is that it provides a more natural outlet for Christian teaching, it provides the biological opportunity by reason of its being the seedbed of our population. It provides the basic economic values for the abundant life. Land and the resources of land are still the primary industry, and agriculture is a primary vocation. If it is true, as I believe it is, that religion must find its expression in the daily task, then the vocations of rural life provide an outlet in which Christianity can attain supreme expression.

The home and the family are the most important institutions in society and from the viewpoint of the Christian religion are the greatest opportunity for the building of the Kingdom. Rural life is more naturally the place of homes and families, thus furnishing the church with its largest opportunity to Christianize society.

Let us here highly resolve that the stream of life in rural America shall continue to be enriched by the ministry of the rural church, so that it will flow toward the new shores of a nobler and better America. This is our reasonable belief, our adventurous faith, our ever-deepening conviction, and in the strength of it we shall conquer.

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